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## ABSTRACT

This seminar overview presents a summary of widely accepted findings by researchers on the qualities, behaviors, and characteristics of effective teachers. As defined in this paper, an effective teacher is one who can engage students in the learning processes, minimize disruptive behavior, and produce desired learning in a large number of students. In the first section, four generalizations about what teachers do as effective managers of student learners are discussed. These dimensions of classroom management include implementing a workable set of rules, structuring and monitoring activities to minimize disruptions, quick and consistent response to misbehavior, and responding to inappropriate behavior without denigrating the student involved. The second section presents eight dimensions of effective teaching, or management of student learning, including: (1) "knowing" students; (2) assigning appropriate tasks; (3) orienting students; (4) monitoring students; (5) relating teaching and testing; (6) involving students in learning; (7) providing continuity; and (8) correcting errors and misunderstandings. In the final section, a discussion is offered on the interrelationships among these dimensions and the complexity of implementing effective teacher behaviors. (JD)

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Title I Dissemination and Program Improvement  
East Coast Seminar

SESSION I: OVERVIEW PRESENTATION  
Teachers, Teaching and Educational Effectiveness

by

Lorin W. Anderson

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In 1972, Benjamin S. Bloom published an article entitled "Innocence in Education." The major thesis of the article was that educators need to become more aware of what they know and don't know about educating children in our schools. Bloom contended that, as educators, we have been "innocents in education because we have not put our own house in order." We need to be much clearer about what we do and do not know so that we don't continually confuse the two. If I could have one wish for education during the next decade, it would be the systematic ordering of our basic knowledge in such a way that what is known and true can be acted on, while what is superstition, fad, and myth can be recognized as such as used only when there is nothing else to support us in our frustration and despair" (p. 335).

One of the areas in which Bloom saw our innocence being threatened at that time was that of teachers and teaching. Bloom contended that the evidence suggested that teaching, rather than teachers, is the key to effective student learning. In Bloom's words, "it is not what teachers are like but what they do in interacting with their students in the classroom that determines what students learn and how they feel about the learning and about themselves" (p. 339). He continued "as the role of teaching becomes more central than the characteristics of the teacher, we are likely to become clearer as to the kinds of preservice and inservice teacher training that can improve teaching" (p. 339).

The majority of the classroom research over the past decade has supported Bloom's contention. The purpose of this paper is to summarize the major

findings of that research in such a way that the reader loses even more of his or her innocence concerning the importance of teaching in fostering learning on the part of students.

#### What Do We Mean When We Say That Teachers Are Effective?

Before one can gain an understanding of the research findings, one must first deal with the issue of teacher effectiveness. Bloom's contention that it is what teachers do, not what they are, that makes them effective skirts the issue of effectiveness. Put simply, the question is "what do we mean when we say that teachers are effective?" The answer to the question depends almost totally on the perspective the respondent takes.

From a fairly long term perspective, teachers are effective when they produce the desired learning outcomes in their students. That is, effective teachers consistently facilitate greater learning or achievement on the part of their students. From a somewhat shorter-term perspective, however, teachers are effective when they "produce high levels of student on-task behaviors and minimize behaviors that disrupt normal school activities" (Lasley, 1981, p. 14).

While the differences in these answers parallel the oft made distinction between teaching and classroom management, similarities in the answers do exist. There is growing evidence to suggest that teachers who are effective in the short term (i.e., produce on-task behaviors while minimizing disruptive behaviors) also are effective in the long term (i.e., produce high levels of learning and achievement). In fact, with the public clamoring simultaneously for higher achievement (often in the guise of "minimum competence") and better discipline, both aspects of effectiveness clearly are worth pursuing.

As used in this paper, then, an effective teacher is one who can engage students in the learning process, minimize disruptive behaviors, and, ultimately, produce desired learning in a large number of students in his or her classroom. To state the point somewhat differently, an effective teacher is one who simultaneously can effectively manage learning and learners. The information presented in this paper is organized into the following major sections: effective management of learners, effective management of learning, and the complexity of doing what is known.

#### Effective Management of Learners

Quite recently, Lasley (1981) summarized the bulk of the research on classroom management. Based on this research Lasley was able to identify four generalizations which he presented as things teachers do as effective managers of learners. Using a term that will be employed throughout this paper, Lasley identified important dimensions of effective classroom management.

1. Effective teachers develop and implement a workable set of classroom rules. A workable set of rules is one that meets three criteria. These rules must be (a) stated so that those effected by the rules know how to behave, (b) reasonable and necessary, and (c) enforceable. If possible, the rules should be enforced by means of naturally occurring consequences of the rule violations, rather than contrived punishments. In contrast with effective teachers, ineffective teachers either do not have rules, do not communicate them clearly, or do not enforce them.

2. Effective teachers structure and monitor classroom activities so as to minimize disruptive behaviors. This generalization represents a preventive approach to classroom management. If the classroom tasks and activities are appropriate for the learners and if the engagement in those tasks and activities is monitored by the teacher, disruptive behaviors are less likely to occur. Or, to put it somewhat differently, if students are not involved in learning, they will be involved in something else. That "something else" quite frequently is some type of disruptive behavior. More will be said about this generalization later in the paper.

3. Effective teachers develop definitions of inappropriate behaviors which they respond to quickly and consistently. This generalization actually is composed of two separate dimensions: recognizing inappropriate behavior and doing something about it. In order to define inappropriate behaviors teachers must take into consideration three aspects of the behavior (a) the severity of the behavior itself, (b) his or her perception of the student exhibiting the behavior, and (c) the timing of the behavior. As a consequence defining inappropriate behavior is no easy task. Although fighting is more severe than whispering, some teachers respond only to fighting, others to both.

The behaviors of some students may be more inappropriate than those exhibited by others. Quite likely, this fact has something to do with the intent or inferred intent of the behavior on the part of the student. The difference in the way in which teachers respond to different students is

perceived by many students as an indication of teacher inconsistency. Finally, the same behavior exhibited at different times may be acceptable or unacceptable. Leaving one's seat during seatwork may be acceptable while leaving one's seat during a discussion may not be. Although the identification of what constitutes inappropriate behaviors is not an easy task, effective teachers have accomplished this task.

The second dimension of this generalization is as important as the first. The need to respond quickly stems from the psychological principle of contiguity. Put simply, the students must see the relationship or connection between their behavior and the teacher's response. The more quickly the teacher responds, the more likely it is that the connection will be made in the student's mind.

The need for consistency in response is often overlooked but extremely important. Students should learn that the same teacher response always follows the same misbehavior. If the response is consistent, students begin to predict what will happen to them when they exhibit that behavior in the future. Once such predictions are made, students become increasingly responsible for their own behavior. As a consequence, students become less likely to "test" the teacher.

4. Effective teachers respond to inappropriate behavior without denigrating the student exhibiting the behavior. When disciplining students, effective teachers focus on what the student did rather than what the student is. They tend to respond to student misbehavior privately rather than publicly. This allows both the teacher and student to "save face." Also,

effective teachers initiate contracts of a when-then variety (e.g., when you do that, then this will happen) in order to involve the student in his or her own behavior change. Once again, the "when-then" approach places the responsibility for appropriate or inappropriate behavior clearly on the students.

Quite interestingly, the four generalizations offered by Lasley are quite consistent with two of seven general approaches to classroom management identified by Weber (1977) in his analysis of general approaches to classroom management. More importantly, however, the two general approaches with which they are similar are those Weber also found to be the most effective in terms of maximizing time-on-task and minimizing disruptive behavior. These two general approaches can be summarized as follows.

The group process approach. The major assumption underlying this approach to classroom management is that schooling takes place within a group context. The central task of the teacher is to establish and maintain an effective, productive classroom group. The establishment and maintenance of a productive classroom group is fostered by providing (a) clear expectations, (b) shared leadership, (c) high attraction, (d) productive group norms, (3) open communication, and (f) high cohesiveness.

The socioemotional climate approach. The major assumption of this approach is that effective management is largely a function of positive teacher-student and student-student relationships. The central task of the teacher then is to promote positive teacher-student and student-student relationships. Teachers are encouraged to talk to the situation and not the character of personality of the student. Students should be taught to

evaluate their own behavior. Logical consequences rather than punishment is used in dealing with misbehavior. Personal involvement of teachers with students is seen as being crucial to successful classroom management.

As can be seen, the first two of Lasley's generalizations are consistent with the group process approach. The last two generalizations are quite consistent with the socioemotional climate approach. And, as previously stated, these two approaches and four generalizations have been found in several studies to be positively related with high levels of time-on-task and low levels of disruptive behavior.

#### Effective Management of Learning

During the past decade a number of researchers have directed their attention toward identifying aspects of teaching which are related to high levels of learning on the part of the students. The names of many of these researchers -- Brophy, Evertson, Good, Medley, Rosenshine, Stallings, and Soar -- are familiar to an ever-increasing number of educators. Despite their different philosophical orientations and, oftentimes different research techniques and methods, a consistency of findings has begun to emerge. Specifically, eight dimensions of effective teaching or management of student learning have emerged. These eight dimensions and a brief description of each are listed below.

1. Effective teachers "know their students". They know the extent to which their students possess the knowledge and skills necessary to learn the new content or objectives. They also know the ways in which their students learn best.

The need to be attentive to the knowledge and skills students bring to the classroom has been documented by Bloom (1976). The research findings summarized by Bloom clearly indicate that the possession of specific knowledge and skills that are directly related to the to-be-acquired knowledge and skills are much more highly related to the acquisition of the new knowledge and skills than are more general abilities such as intelligence, reading comprehension, or mathematical aptitude. That is, if all students possessed the necessary knowledge and skills related to new knowledge and skill, the importance of differences in general abilities and aptitudes would be greatly reduced.

More recent research has emphasized the need for the teachers to be attentive to the ways in which students learn. Differences in the ways in which students actually learn or prefer to learn have been documented and have been termed "learning styles." While a single term applies to these differences, they have been viewed differently by different educators. Letteri (1980), for example, associated learning styles with the way in which students attend to and process information. Letteri contends that there are seven dimensions on which students can be differentiated. Among these dimensions are analytical-global, complexity-simplicity, and reflectiveness-impulsivity. Letteri's research suggests that high, average, and low achieving students can be differentiated on the basis of their cognitive learning styles. For example, high achieving students tend to be analytical, focused, narrow categorizers, complex thinkings, reflective, sharpeners, and tolerant of ambiguity. According to Letteri, these seven dimensions account for over 80 percent of the variability in students' standardized test scores.

In contrast, Dunn and Dunn (1979) view learning styles quite differently. They contend that there are four broad categories of learning styles. These categories are (1) environmental (such as the way in which students respond to various classroom settings), (2) emotional (such as motivation and responsibility), (3) sociological (such as preferences for learning in groups or alone), and (4) physical (such as the senses students use to take in information or environmental stimulation). Several studies suggest that learning is improved when there is a "match" between the method of instruction and the preferred learning styles of the students.

Whether the focus is on what students bring to the learning situation or how they learn the evidence is clear that effective teachers do "know their students." Such knowledge is invaluable to teachers if they are to plan and implement effective instruction.

2. Effective teachers assign appropriate tasks to their students. Once they have gathered information from their students, effective teachers act on this knowledge. One form of such action is the assignment of appropriate learning tasks. According to Doyle (1979), a task is composed of a goal to be attained and a set of activities related to the attainment of that goal. Two aspects of this effectiveness dimension are important to highlight. First, effective teachers are cognizant of the goal-activity relationship. They seem to know the type of activities that increase the likelihood of task attainment. They refrain from assigning activities whose relationship to goal attainment is questionable. They know students view these activities as "busy work."

Second, the tasks are assigned so as to be of appropriate difficulty for the students. They are neither too difficult nor too easy. If an error is made in the assignment of tasks, however, the error should be on the easy side so that a high success rate can be ensured. Thus, effective teachers are able to assign tasks appropriate to the present level of functioning of their students and at the same time are related to future tasks demanded by the curriculum.

When faced with a heterogeneous class, effective teachers realize that some type of sorting of students within the class is necessary if assigned tasks are to be appropriate for the vast majority of the students. If effective teachers are unsure of the appropriateness of a given task for the students they tend to review relevant prior learning and necessary prerequisites to ensure some degree of task appropriateness.

3. Effective teachers orient their students. In common parlance effective teachers inform their students of the "rules of the game." As has been indicated previously part of this orientation has to do with classroom rules. From a management of learning perspective, however, the meaning of orientation takes on a somewhat different perspective. Effective teachers inform their students as to what they are to learn, how they are to learn it, how long they will have to learn it, and how they are to demonstrate they have learned. They are more likely to begin their lesson with "Here's what you are going to learn today" than "Here's what we're going to do today." They spend some time introducing the lesson to the learners, often indicating the importance of the new content or objectives. They make clear expectations they have for the students and encourage students to live up to those expectations.

4. Effective teachers monitor their students. They may watch the facial expression of a pre-selected subgroup of students to check their understanding of what is being presented. They ask questions in class. They call on specific students in a class or group, making sure everyone is checked and receives feedback on the correctness of their answers.

During seatwork effective teachers circulate among the students checking their work and answering questions. They use short tests fairly frequently to assess student mastery of the content and objectives. They inform students of the adequacy of their performance.

5. Effective teachers relate teaching and testing. Effective teachers try to ensure that there is sufficient overlap between the content or objectives taught and the content and objectives tested. They don't teach, then test to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching or the students' learning. Rather, they use the results of tests to make instructional and learning decisions. If a large number of students do poorly on the test, they rereach the content or objectives to the whole class. If only a few students perform poorly they find ways of working with these students to ensure their mastery of important content or objectives.

6. Effective teachers promote student involvement or engagement in the learning process. Effective teachers seem to know that its what their students do that is learned not what they do. They focus their students' attention on the task. They gain and maintain student's attention at the beginning of the lesson. They realize that most things worth learning take time. They spend as much time as possible to ensure the majority of students learn.

Effective teachers wait for students to respond to questions, rather than too quickly addressing the questions to other students or providing the answers themselves. They provide opportunities for successful practice of the newly acquired learning. They do not allow students to independently practice incomplete learning. They encourage students to "think about" the new learning. In mathematics, for example, they emphasize mental computation.

7. Effective teachers provide continuity for their students. Effective teachers review relevant, prior learning before embarking on the transmission of new learning. They refer the new material back to earlier curriculum materials.

In addition to transitions between old and new learning, effective teachers also are concerned for the transitions between activities that occur within a class period or lesson. They provide what good high school and college coaches call "momentum." They keep things going. They indicate that lessons have beginnings, middles, and ends. They are less likely to digress from the topic at hand; to "go off on tangents."

8. Effective teachers correct identified student errors and misunderstandings. Effective teachers realize that errors and misunderstandings tend to accumulate and interfere with future learning. They understand the importance of correcting these errors and misunderstandings. They give students second chances to correct their answers to classroom questions. They give clues to the students. They teach students how to figure out the answers they could not derive on their own. They check homework, when assigned, and have students correct the errors identified on the homework.

They may teach the more able students, dismiss them, and help those who need extra help. They may use students who have already mastered the content or objectives to serve as models or tutors to those who haven't.

#### The Complexities of Doing What We Know

If one examines the information presented in the previous two sections, one is struck with the apparent simplicity of what we now know about effective management of learners and learning. One may be led to ask, if it's all that simple, that "common-sense," why aren't we doing it. Unfortunately, putting into practice what we know is quite complex. At least three reasons can be offered for this complexity: 1) the interrelationships among the effectiveness dimensions, 2) the difficulty doing it, and 3) the beliefs of teachers concerning whether they should do it. Let us address each of these reasons briefly.

#### The Interrelationships Among the Dimensions

The dimensions of teacher effectiveness are not independent of one another. Rather, these dimensions are interrelated. As a consequence, each dimension potentially, or actually, influences other dimensions within the entire effectiveness system. Two examples may help to illustrate this point.

One of Lasley's generalizations (see page 4) suggests that effective teachers structure and monitor classroom activities so as to minimize the likelihood that disruptive behaviors will occur. This generalization clearly links the management of learning with the management of learners. If teachers are effective in managing learning then the need for managing

learners will likely be reduced. Conversely, if teachers are ineffective managers of learning, then a bulk of their time and effort likely will be spent managing learners. Thus, effective management of learners and learning are interrelated. As a consequence, what should be done to best manage learners may well depend on what is being done managing learning.

A second example comes from the general function of management of learning. The research indicates that effective teachers (1) assign appropriate tasks to their students, and (2) monitor their students' learning. In a classroom in which students differ widely in their levels or types of abilities or prior achievements, one may choose to accomplish simultaneously these two tasks by assigning different tasks to different subgroups within the class. Either instructional grouping or completely individualized instruction may be used to accomplish this goal. However, we now know (and probably have suspected for quite some time) that the greater the number of groups in a classroom the more difficult it is for the teacher to effectively monitor the students' learning. Conversely, using a whole class approach to instruction makes monitoring considerably easier but decreases the likelihood that the assigned task will be appropriate for a large proportion of the students. Once again, the interrelationship among the effectiveness dimensions becomes evident.

#### The Difficulty of Doing

A second reason for the complexity of doing what we know stems from the sheer difficulty of actually doing it. Some educators may feel that it simply takes too much time and effort to do. Again, a few examples may suffice to illustrate this point. Within the context of managing learners, responding

consistently to inappropriate behavior is difficult. As human beings, consistency is not one of our strong points. Teachers are "up" one day; "down" the next. While certain misbehaviors can "slip by" when they are "up;" these same misbehaviors are dealt with severely when they are "down." It is very difficult to respond consistently. Thus, while it makes good sense to do so, acting in consort with what we believe is not easy.

A similar point can be made with respect to the admonition to "know your students." It takes time, patience, keen observation, and appropriate use of test results to get to know students. Many teachers already feel that there already is too much testing in education. Thus, the call for additional information through tests (which may not even appear to be related to the curriculum, as in the case of tests of learning styles) may not be greeted enthusiastically.

One of the negative reactions of many teachers to minimum competency or basic skills testing programs, for example, is the amount of record keeping required by such programs. Records of information are necessary if what we know about students is to be passed on from teacher to teacher, or grade level to grade level. Yet, record keeping is seen as a burden, rather than a benefit.

One way of knowing students is to ensure that they possess the necessary prerequisites before confronting new learning tasks. These ways of knowing, however, imply a careful sequencing of tasks; an endeavor that takes much time and effort. Thus, while effective teachers do know their students, the knowing process is a difficult one indeed.

Finally, correcting student errors and misunderstandings takes time. If we take the time necessary for the correction of these errors and misunderstandings can we complete what we need to in order to attain the minimum program required by district or state mandate. Furthermore, what do we do with all of these students in the class who escaped without errors and misunderstandings? Do we, in fact, rob Peter to pay Paul? These are difficult questions indeed.

#### Beliefs About What Should Be

A final problem in attempting to practice what we now know is that many teachers don't believe that what we know should be done. Although a claim that many teachers don't believe that we shouldn't do what is effective in terms of student learning may be viewed as incredulous by some, let us consider a few examples.

We know that effective teachers relate teaching and testing. One aspect of this dimension is testing what we teach. A skeptic may view this aspect as teaching what we test, or more skeptically, teaching to test. As such our skeptic may be philosophically opposed to any attempt to link teaching with testing. Hence, testing should not be related to teaching.

One must admit that there is a fine line between teaching to the test and testing what you teach. The distinction must be made in terms of the use or function of tests. Are tests viewed as indicators of learning or as determinants of learning? Clearly, the intent of tests is that they are indicators rather than determinants of learning; the determiners of both testing and teaching is the curriculum or, more specifically, what we think to be important for students to learn.

A similar concern may be voiced about the desirability of orienting students, that is, informing students of what, how, and to what extent they are to learn. As one secondary teacher said in response to my statement that informing students as to what they are to learn increases the likelihood that they will in fact learn, "Of course students will learn if you tell them what you want them to learn." Underlying this type of reaction is the belief that it would be undesirable to inform these students. Or, as another teacher said to me, "Part of learning is figuring out what is important to learn." My response was that if this was indeed one part of learning it was, in fact, one part. And, if it was but one part, then students could be informed of when then were supposed to "figure out what was important."

Should we really orient students? Or should we let them figure out the behavior and learning games for themselves? If we keep students informed, are we guilty of spoon-feeding them? Such questions question the belief that it is, in fact, a good thing to orient students to the expected or desired learning. If teachers question whether it is a good thing to inform students, it simply will not be done though doing so may be effective.

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